

DECLARATION OF JAMES W. CLARK

My name is James W. Clark and I am the Television Production Manager for the City of West Palm Beach, Florida.

When I decided to leave commercial television about 5 years ago to take over the reins of the government access channel for the City of Miami, I knew it was going to be more rewarding. I didn't realize just how impactful the "G" in PEG could be.

Now "up the coast" in West Palm Beach, I have been privileged to take part in revitalizing 2 channels - and have seen the response in the community. With the funds made available to both of the government access channels I've been associated with, important equipment and facility improvements were made. Without those funds, the audience may not have responded as well as they did (and are). Private concerns, such as the cable systems mandated to carry PEG channels, are often involved in the communities they do business with. However, without a government mandate to provide such access and financial support, the decision to participate would be left to shareholders - not necessarily what's best for the community.

At both government channels, I was able to not only improve the equipment used to bring live and taped meetings to the public - but also to keep the technology current. This is a critical aspect of the funding that comes along with the franchising agreements, as technology used to acquire and produce TV and related multimedia content has evolved rapidly. Those who try to produce content for audiences able to see network quality programs and shows are left with ineffective tools to produce with if they're not able to keep up with technological changes.

As a direct result of PEG funding, the capital improvements and personnel needed to bring programming home to citizens is possible. The funding doesn't just make the democratic process visible to the public it serves - which, in and of itself would be worthy of the mandate.

Other services our government access channels provide, are to provide residents and businesses with emergency preparedness messages and reports; to act as an in-house video services unit for Police, Fire and other city agencies for training; and to provide residents with copies of public meetings, presentations and initiatives.

In Miami and West Palm Beach we have produced creative vehicles to get important and informative messages across. Segments such as "Hurricane Tips", designed to make sure citizens understand how important preparation is in surviving disasters (both natural and man-made); "FYI" - to explain how to take advantage of City services; and "Alphabet Soup" - a quick, entertaining way to decipher the variety of acronyms that are used to describe various agencies.

Creativity is certainly needed to pique the interest of viewers, but there's nothing like direct access to the source of information.

In the aftermath of 9/11/01, we ensured that our access channel was immediately airing advisories, updates, and other official news - directly from the City of Miami to its residents. While local media were covering the story, only our access channel was available as a direct, unfiltered source of what the City was doing in a very uncertain time.

Last hurricane season, our West Palm Beach access channel provided messages from our Mayor, public safety agencies, and utilities representatives, to ensure our residents were fully prepared for a direct hit from a major hurricane (Wilma). Our station produced 75 updates or advisories during a 2 week period, including press conferences, etc. After the storm, the station documented the City's recovery efforts, provided citizens with an update about power and water situations, where to get help from government agencies, and even documented property damage to City facilities.

In Miami, the local media recognized our government access channel as being an effective way to reach citizens. In West Palm Beach, our programming is award-winning, and our elected officials have provided strong support for our efforts to date.

Without PEG funding, these services wouldn't happen.

I strongly endorse the continuation of a mandate to video/data/information service providers to financially support PEG channels. Communities are best served at the local level.

I declare, under penalty of perjury that the facts stated above are true.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Clark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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